FBI Checking Left Catholics In Media Thefts

By Vin McLellan
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BOSTON—The FBI has concentrated the investagation into the theft of about 1,000 documents from its Media, Pa., office on the militant nonviolent Roman Catholic movement that is centered mainly in Washington, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Boston.

The Citizens Commission to Investigate the FBI has claimed credit for the March 8 burglary. It had mailed separate packets of Xeroxed copies of the documents—31 documents to date— to newsmen, politicians and radical groups.

The FBI effort, specifically, has focused upon the defense-support organization for the Harrisburg, Pa., conspiracy trial of the Rev. Philip Berrigan and five others who were indicted in January for allegedly conspiring to blow up the heating systems of some government buildings in Washington, and to kidnap presidential adviser Henry Kissinger.

Seven other persons were named as co-conspirators but were not indicted.

Although none of the six defendants has reported being questioned directly, several have acknowledged that they know of federal agents' efforts to fix their whereabouts in the first two weeks of March and on the day of the Media raid.

The Rev. Neil McLaughlin, one of the defendants in the Harrisburg case, said in Baltimore that he dose not know of any defendant being questioned directly.

"Indirectly, however," he added, "they've been very thorough. Federal agents inquired of the people who live with me where I was on the date of the Media break, and they were told that I and Joe Wenderoth (the Rev. Joseph Wenderoth, another defendant), had been at a conference at Notre Dame University. And then they had agents check with the people we were with at Notre Dame to verify it.

"I feel very uneasy about the links that have been made in some of the media associating our indictments with the Media case," Father McLaughlin said.

A report published in The Philadelphia Daily News quoted "federal investigators" as saying that the stolen files contained crucial documents in the case against the Harrisburg defendants and that these papers are now in the hands of the Berrigan associates.

"We don't know who did it," Father McLaughlin said, "and we haven't been contacted by them. To be honest, I just don't know anything at all about them."

In addition to agents' investigation of Catholic radicals, the bureau's laboratory has disclosed that copies of the Media documents were duplicated on one of three models in the Xerox 660-series copying machines.

While by one unofficial estimate there are more than 200,000 of the 660-model machines in use in the United States and as many as 2,000 in the Boston area alone, the FBI has been visiting Boston owners of the 660-model copiers to get sample copies.

Each copier, according to Xerox experts, leaves on its copies distinctive marks that correspond to imperfections on the light-sensitive selenium drum that is a major element in the Xerography process.

Laboratory comparison of the samples and the copies of stolen documents could pinpoint, experts say, the machine on which the stolen papers were copied.

Gerald A. Mulligan, manager of public relations operations for Xerox Corp., at their Rochester, N.Y., headquarters, acknowledged that the corporation complied with the bureau's request for a list of customers who lease the 660-series machines.

Mulligan said Xerox ". . . decided at the very highest level" not to provide laboratory samples of the different sorts of copy images produced by the three models in the 660 series.

The 660-series copiers are relatively low-volume (660 copies per hour), table-top units and are used primarily in small offices. Although Mulligan said Xerox gave the FBI "the list of 660-model owners, period," federal agents in the Boston area reportedly are also working from a selected list of 660-series machines that had unusually high-volume runs for the month of March.

Xerox collects meter readings from each machine monthly for billing purposes, computerizes them and disseminates this information to salesmen.

In Boston, sources in the Catholic antiwar movement say FBI agents have questioned most of the leading members of the activist Catholic community directly.

The Rev. Jack White, who is involved largely in social action work, and the Rev. Anthony Melaney, who is involved in the Catholic antiwar movement, said agents have questioned them about the Media incident.

In Washington, Sister Beverly Bell, one of the seven alleged co-conspirators in the Harrisburg case, said that she had been questioned and investigated about her whereabouts in early March.

Herb Held, Baltimore coordinator for the Harrisburg Defense Committee, said that right after the Media break-in and since "the FBI has been swarming all over this city. They've contacted virtually ev-

eryone in the militant Catholic movement.

In New York, Sue Susman of New York's Harrisburg Defense Committee said that last week federal agents visited the Jesuit theologate at Woodstock, in New York City, at least 10 times asking members about the activities of some of the known Catholic activists among them. Agents have been following some members of her community on a 24-hour basis, she said.

Two weeks ago two FBI agents searched the New York home of Kathleen Murphy, 75-year-old mother of the Rev. Edward Murphy, a Jesuit priest who recently moved from Boston to New York to work full-time at the national headquarters of the Harrisburg 6 Defense Committee.

When Mrs. Murphy said she didn't know anything about the Media raid, the agents asked her if she had seen her son carrying any documents around the house.

Receiving a negative answer to that, they proceeded to search her five-room Bronx flat after she signed a paper saying they did not need a warrant.

Father Murphy said yesterday that the agents opened dresser and desk drawers in all rooms and opened suitcases, saying they were looking for copies of the stolen documents.